

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
14 July 1966

State Dept. review completed

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HIGHLIGHTS

USAF jet fighters downed two North Vietnamese MIG-21 Fishbeds with air-to-air missiles during air engagements early today north and northwest of Hanoi. Former I Corps commander General Thi, currently under confinement in Saigon, has reportedly been given permission to leave for the United States at any time. Press reports indicate that militant Tri Quang may soon end his hunger strike, possibly to assume a more active role in Buddhist political affairs.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US Operation EWA and South Vietnamese Operation BINH PHU II have ended (Paras. 2-3). Philippine President Marcos finally signs Vietnam Aid Bill (Para. 4).

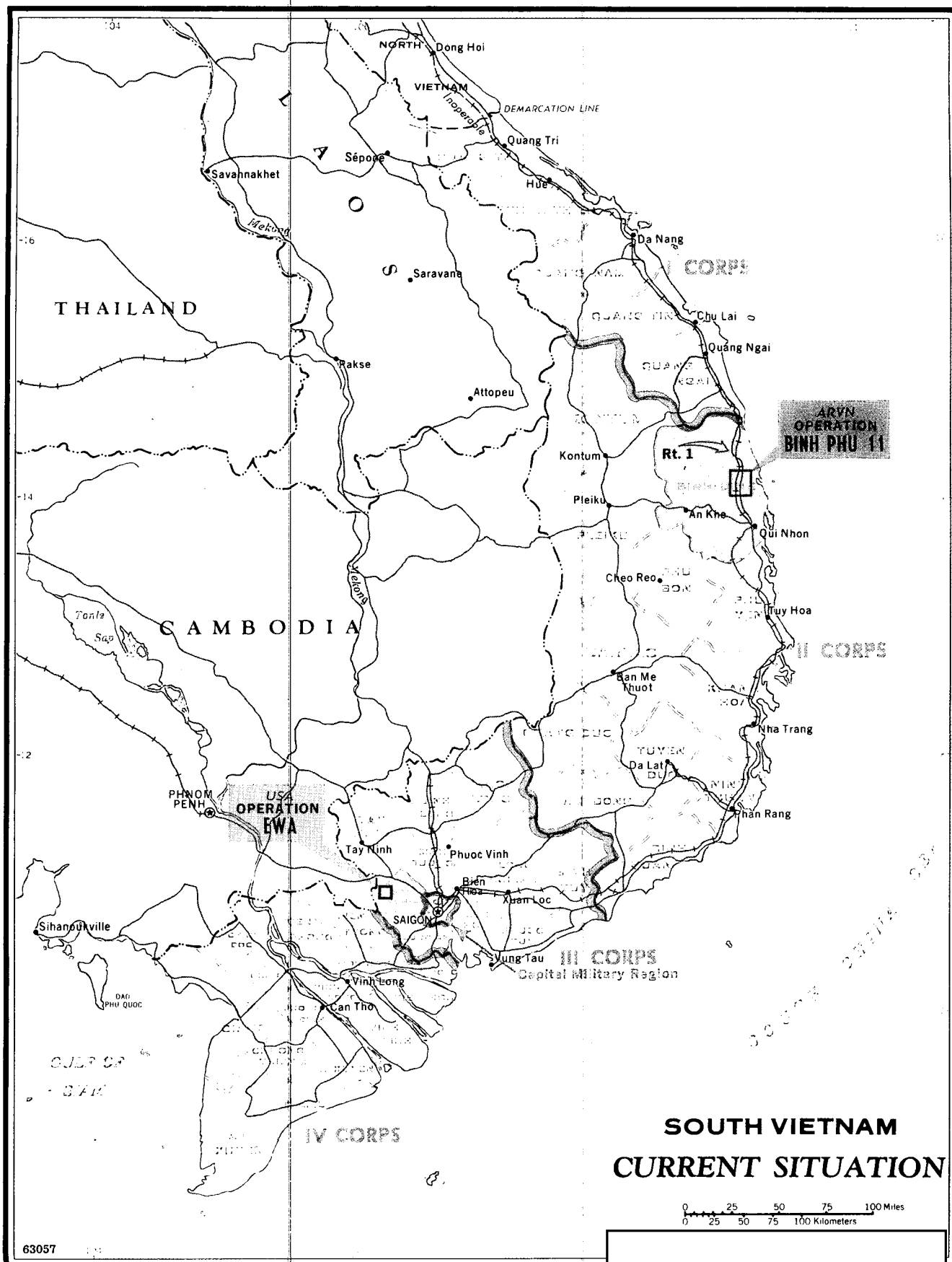
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
General Thi has apparently been given permission to leave for the United States immediately if he wishes to do so (Para. 1). Thi will probably come to the US for an indefinite period, but US observers think that he and his associates envisage Thi's ultimate return to Vietnam to occupy an important position (Para. 2). The government's negotiations with the dissident tribal autonomy movement FULRO are reported endangered by Premier Ky's latest attitude (Para. 3). Some 700 individuals have filed as candidates for the 108 seats at stake in the September elections for a constitutional assembly (Para. 4). Internal problems within the Buddhist Institute remain unresolved (Para. 5). Tri Quang may soon abandon his fast and may be considering cooperation with the antigovernment "Religious Citizens Bloc" (Para. 6).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: US fighters downed two MIG-21 Fishbeds north of Hanoi, bringing the confirmed number of MIGs shot down to 18. In a separate air engagement with MIG-17 Frescos, one F-8E Crusader received battle damage and the pilot was forced to eject (Paras. 1-4).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: A 9 July communiqué by the Liberation Front Central Committee reflects the more sober view now being taken by the Communists of the situation in South Vietnam (Paras. 1-2). Reports from Rumania indicate that Bucharest may send volunteer medical teams to North Vietnam but no combat troops (Paras. 3-4).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US forces are participating in nine of 26 battalion-sized or larger ground operations currently in progress in South Vietnam. Ground combat activity is reported continuing at low intensity.

2. Operation EWA, a six-day search-and-destroy operation conducted by one battalion of the 25th Infantry Division in an area about 35 miles west of Saigon in Hau Nghia Province, ended yesterday. Although two Viet Cong battalions--the 267th and the 269th--were reported to be in the area of operations, only light contact was made with the enemy. One American was reported wounded. A total of 16 Viet Cong were killed and eight captured. In addition, US forces captured or destroyed 33 tons of rice and large quantities of enemy military equipment and fortifications.

3. South Vietnamese Operation BINH PHU 11, a highway security operation along Route 1 in coastal Binh Dinh Province, was terminated on 12 July. South Vietnamese casualties totaled 12 killed and 11 wounded in contrast with Viet Cong losses of 91 killed.

Philippine Aid to Vietnam

4. The Vietnam Aid Bill, passed after stormy debate by the Philippine Senate, has finally been signed into law by President Marcos after a one-month delay. The bill authorizes a 2,000-man contingent to be made up of construction engineers and security guards. An advance contingent is expected to leave for Saigon within 30 days and the full contingent is expected to be in South Vietnam by the end of the year. Commander of the troops will be Brig. Gen. Guandencio Tobias, a paratroop commander and veteran of the anti-Huk campaigns. A military spokesman has declined to locate the general's headquarters but has stated that it will be within 45 minutes' flying time of Saigon.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

General Thi May Soon Depart for the US



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2. Thi previously has expressed a clear-cut desire to come to the United States eventually, and may well decide to do so in the near future. Despite the fact that Thi's visit in the US would be for an indefinite period, US observers have commented that there seems to be little question that both Thi and his associates contemplate Thi's eventual return to Vietnam to occupy a position of political or military importance.

FULRO Negotiations May Be Running Into Trouble

3. Contrary to previous indications, Premier Ky recently refused to agree to two key demands made by the dissident tribal autonomy movement, FULRO, [REDACTED]

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The two issues were the rights of the montagnards to form separate paramilitary units and to fly their own pennant along with the Vietnamese flag. Thus far, FULRO representatives who have been meeting with government negotiators in Ban Me Thuot have not been told of the premier's decision for fear that negotiations would break down. The government's special commissioner for montagnard affairs, Paul Nur, will probably attempt to persuade Premier Ky to reverse his recent decision.

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Election Developments

4. According to preliminary reports, some 700 individuals have filed as candidates for the 108 seats at stake in the September election for the constitutional assembly. The Vietnamese Interior Ministry official who provided the basis for this information was pleased by the number of candidates, although there will probably be some shrinkage due to subsequent withdrawals. The names and affiliations of the candidates are not yet available.

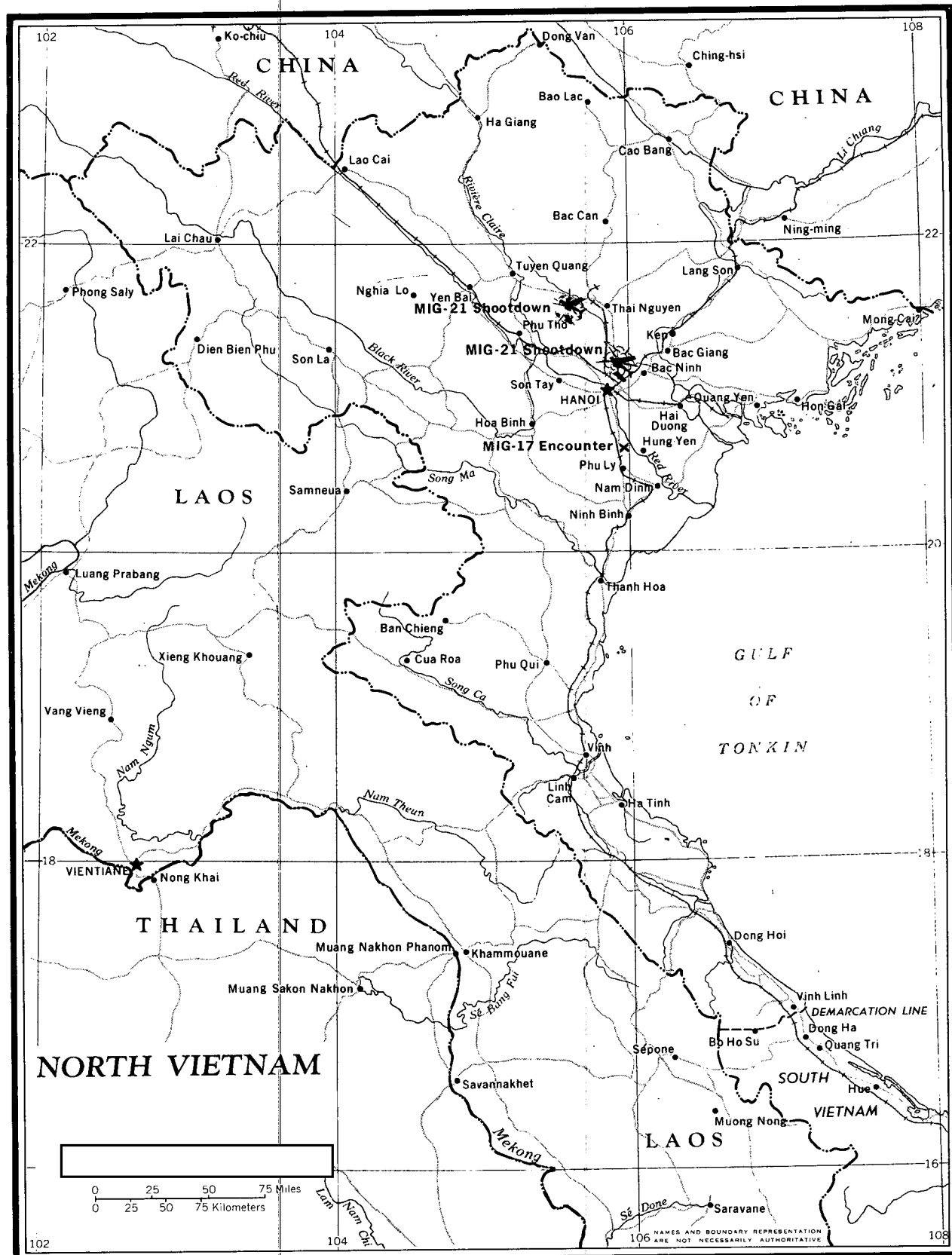
Buddhist Developments

5. Thich Ho Giac, a close associate of Institute chairman Tam Chau, told a US Embassy officer today that Premier Ky has agreed to release the 58 Buddhist monks still under government detention. Ho Giac commented, however, that this concession was "too late" because the militant Institute faction had become convinced that cooperation with the government was not feasible. Despite Tam Chau's letter of withdrawal from Institute affairs yesterday, Ho Giac claimed that the questions of Institute policy and leadership were still basically undecided.

6. A US wire service today quoted Buddhist sources as stating that Thich Tri Quang may soon abandon his hunger fast--a move which might signify Quang's intention to assume a more active political role. The press item also stated that Quang yesterday held a lengthy conference with Catholic Father Hoang Quynh, leader of the recently formed antigovernment "Religious Citizens Bloc." A Tri Quang supporter on the Buddhist Institute council has been cooperating with the Religious Citizens Bloc, and it is possible that Tri Quang is now seriously considering throwing his weight behind this movement. Thus far, the bloc has attracted the support of several political and religious splinter groups and unemployed civilian politicians in its criticism of the government and the forthcoming September elections.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. USAF F-4C Phantom jets in two encounters with North Vietnamese MIG-21 Fishbeds on 14 July scored two kills with air-to-air missiles. No US aircraft were lost. US pilots have now downed 18 North Vietnamese fighter aircraft, three of which have been supersonic MIG-21s.

2. The first air engagement on 14 July took place 12 miles north of Hanoi as a flight of four F-4Cs observed a MIG-21 making a run on a USAF F-105 Thunderchief. The US flight leader gained position behind the MIG and destroyed it with a Sidewinder missile.

3. The second air engagement occurred moments later 33 miles northwest of Hanoi and involved the same flight of Phantoms. A MIG-21 attempted to engage one of the US jets but was hit by Sidewinders from a second F-4C before he could fire. The MIG-21 pilot was observed ejecting as his aircraft stalled, inverted, and fell away.

4. In a separate incident 22 miles southeast of Hanoi, three Navy F-8E Crusaders exchanged fire with two MIG-17 Frescos. The US pilots reported hitting one MIG in the wing with gunfire after launching two missiles which failed to guide. One F-8E received hits in the tail and wing and was losing fuel as the US planes departed the area. The refueling probe of the damaged F-8E failed to extend and the pilot was forced to eject en route to Da Nang. A helicopter rescue was effected and the pilot is reported in good condition.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. The increasingly sober view the Communists are taking of the situation in South Vietnam was reflected in a communiqué issued at the conclusion of an enlarged conference of the Liberation Front Central Committee Presidium. This conference, which was held from 7-9 July, examined "the over-all situation" in the South since the introduction of US combat troops in March 1965 and devoted "a great deal of time" to assessing the future plans of the US. It concluded that the US intends to continue to strengthen its forces and to "escalate" its air attacks on North Vietnam.

2. The communiqué reiterated in routine fashion the determination of the Front to continue to fight and made the usual prediction of ultimate victory. It avoided, however, any threat of retaliation for US air strikes against POL facilities in North Vietnam.

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3. The US Embassy in Bucharest reported on 13 July [redacted] that Rumania has called upon its hospitals to provide a limited number of medical teams to "volunteer" for service in Vietnam. [redacted] other "technicians" may also go to North Vietnam for "strictly defensive aid." No details were given as to what kind of technicians might be sent.

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4. [redacted] no serious consideration has been given to the dispatch of Rumanian combat troops to Vietnam. The Czech ambassador to Bucharest on 7 July told a Brazilian representative there that the Warsaw Pact members have no intention of sending "volunteer" troops to Vietnam.

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